

October 28, 1999

To: Dockets Management Branch
The Food and Drug Administration
Department of Health and Human Services, Rm. 1-23
12420 Parklawn Dr.
Rockville, MD 20857
Email Address -- fdadockets@oc.fda.gov

Re: Docket Number: 99P-1340/CP 1 Comments –
Petition by Environmental Health Network to declare
Calvin Klein's Eternity eau de parfum "misbranded"

Perfumes: My Experience

When exposed to commercial fragrances, I get a severe headache, get woozy, feel faint, have difficulty thinking and focusing. If unable to leave the area, I would pass out.

Because of this, I needed a VOC (volatile organic chemical) air cleaner, a portable negative ion generator and a portable oxygen tank to be able to attend my son's wedding. For years, I have been unable to attend the theatre, the opera or any other public event requiring me to sit within a crowd of people.

This has also put me at great risk when traveling by air. On a flight to California, one of the stewardesses was wearing a product that caused me severe distress, and she refused to stay away from me, but spent time talking with someone in the next row, after I informed her of my condition. There was no escape, and I nearly passed out before she finally moved away. My headache lasted for hours. Am I to be too afraid to get on a plane to be able to see my two sons and my new grandchild in California?

While working at the Providence Police Department, I had to leave the office on several occasions because of perfume on someone in the office. Finally, I lost the job because they moved someone onto my shift who habitually reeks of fragrance. The first day she was there, I became so ill that an officer had to take me home.

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It is not the scent itself that affects me, but the toxic chemicals, especially those derived from petroleum. I know this because natural products such as essential oils do not make me sick, but chemicals, such as those in gasoline fumes, copier maintenance products, paint (especially oil-based), carpets, and gas heater emissions cause bad reactions.

My right to enter public places is being denied by the presence of these toxic fumes. I understand that women (and some men) will never stop wearing scented products. However, there is no need or excuse for the extraneous toxic chemicals used to carry those scents.

I also understand that, under current law, your ability to regulate these products is unfortunately limited. Please, at least do the little that you are authorized to do and properly label these things, including "Eternite", as the dangerous chemicals that they are.

I hope to work with my Senator, who is on the health committee, to strengthen your powers to control this menace to public health. I know many others besides myself who are sickened by these products. I also know many who become sick but don't know the source.

When I was in graduate school, they built a new building, and I had to bring an electronic air cleaner with me in order to attend class. After a few sessions, another student approached me to ask what my machine was. When I explained, she said she had gotten a headache every time she came to class – until I started bringing the air cleaner. This is similar to the many who have told me they find other people's perfume unpleasant, but don't realize it's not just a "bad smell".

Gaseous chemicals enter the body just as surely through the nose as foods through the mouth. They should be regulated just as strictly.

Sincerely,

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